

Message Text

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AMCONSUL BOMBAY
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AMCONSUL MADRAS
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 18576

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT IN
SUBJECT: MRS. GANDHI DEFENDS SANJAY; LAUNCHES FRONTAL ATTACK ON
THE CPI

REF: NEW DELHI 18127, B.NEW DELHI 18493 (NOTAL)

1. IN A SHARP ESCALATION OF THE ATTACK ON THE COMMUNIST PARTY
OF INDIA (CPI) WHICH HAS BEEN HEATING UP SINCE THE GAUHATI
AICC SESSION IN NOVEMBER, PRIME MINISTER GANDHI ON DEC. 23
DELIVERED A VIGOROUS ASSAULT ON THE CPI FOR SPREADING BASELESS
PROPAGANDA AGAINST HER, HER SON AND THE CONGRESS PARTY.
ADDRESSING A POLITICAL TRAINING SEMINAR FOR CONGRESS WORKERS
IN DELHI, MRS. GANDHI CHAGEDTHE CPI WITH COLLABORATING WITH
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THE BRITISH AGAINST THE CONGRESS DURING THE WUIT INDIA
MOVEMENT. REFERRING TO THE CPIS ATTACK ON SANJAY'S FIVE-
POINT PROGRAM AS A "REACTIONARY PROGRAM," SHE SAID THAT
THE CPI HAD CHARGED THAT "REACTIONARIES" WERE TAKING OVER
THE CONGRESS, SHE ADDED: "THEY SAY THAT THEY SUPPORT
ME BUTTHERE CAN BE NO GREATER INSULT" THAN TO SAY THAT

SHE COULD BE INFLUENCED BY REACTIONARIES OR ANYONE ELSE.

2. MRS. GANDHI CLAIMED THAT THE CPI CRITICISM OF CERTAIN CONGRESS POLICIES AND LEADERS WAS ACTUALLY DIRECTED AT HER. SHE SAID THAT THE COMMUNISTS HAD COME TO HER TO SAY THAT SANJAY "SPEAKS AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS." REFERRING TO THIS CRITICISM OF SANJAY, THE PM STATED THAT THIS ATTACK WAS NOT ON HIM. ACCORDING TO THE SAMACHAR ACCOUNT, SHE SAID "HE IS MUCH TOO SMALLA FRY OR PERSON BECOUSE HE IS NOT GOING TO BE THE PRIME MINISTER OR THE PRESIDENT OR ANYTHING LIKE THIS. ALL HE CAN BE IS A CONGRESS WORKER. THEREFORE, I THINK THE ATTACK IS VERY DEFINITELY ON ME," SHE ADDED.

3. MRS. GANDHI CHARGED THAT THE CPI ATTACK ON HER HAD BEGUN LONG BEFORE SANJAY HAD ENTERED PUBLIC LIFE. IN ADDITION, SHE SAID THAT THE COMMUNISTS HAD ALSO ATTACKED OTHER CONGRESS LEADERS SUCH AS L.N. MISHRA (RAILWAYS MINISTER WHO WAS ASSASSINATED IN JANUARY 1975) AND DEFENSE MINISTER BANSI LAL. SHE ALSO SAID THAT SOME OF THE CPI STATEMENTS WHICH HAD BEEN APPEARING RECENTLY "HAVE CAUSED US GREAT CONCERN AND WE CANNOT TOLERATE ANYTHING THAT WILL WEAKEN THE ORGANIZATION."

4. WITH REGARD TO SANJAY, THE PM STATED THAT SHE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER HE WOULD REMAIN IN POLITICS AND ADDED: "IN FACT I THINK HE NEVER WOULD HAVE COME INTO POLITICS IF THERE HAD NOT BEEN THAT TREMENDOUS ATTACK ON HIM IN PARLIAMENT EVEN BEFORE THE MEMRGENCY BECOUSE BASICALLY HE WAS NOT INTERESTED IN ANY OF THESE THINGS."
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5. MRS. GANDHI HAD OPENED HER ATTACK ON THE CPI BY RECALLING THAT THE COMMUNISTS HAD DECIDED TO COLLABORATE WITH THE BRITISH AFTER THE SOVIET UNINON HAD ENTERED THE SECOND WORLD WAR. EVEN AFTER INDEPENDENCE, SHE CONTINUED, THE CPI SPREAD PROPAGANDE AMONG OTHER COMMUNIST PARTIES INCLUDING IN THE SOVIET UNION THAT INDIA WAS NOT REALLY INDEPENDENT, THAT IT "WAS STILL UNDER THE THUMB OF THE BRITISH." TO COUNTER THIS PROPAGANDA, HER FATHER HAD INVITED SOVIET LEADERS TO VISIT INDIA AND SEE FOR THEMSELVES. THEY LEARNED THAT THE CONGRESS DID REPRESENT THE INDIAN PEOPLE AND THAT FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WOULD BE OF BENEFIT, "AS IT LATER PROVED TO BE." SHE ADDED THAT THE SOVIETS HAD HELPED INDIA IN TIMES OF STRESS AND PEACE.

6. THE PM CONTINUED HER OFFENSIVE ON DECEMBER 24 AT A LARGE "SPONTANEIUS" RALLY OUTSIDE HER RESIDENCE. SAMACHAR REPORTS THAT 50,000 PEOPLE GATHERED TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR

SUPPORT OF MRS. GANDHI'S ATTACK ON THE CPI. ADDRESSING THE RALLY, THE FIRST SUCH "SPONTANEOUS" GATHERING OUTSIDE HER RESIDENCE SINCE JUST BEFORE THE DECLARATION OF THE EMERGENCY, MRS. GANDHI REFUTED COMMUNIST ALLEGATIONS THAT THE CONGRESS WAS FAVORING VESTED INTERESTS AND ADDED: "I NEVER DO OR SAY ANYTHING WITHOUT DEEP THINKING. WHEN WE SAW THAT THEY (CPI) WERE ATTACKING THE CONGRESS, IT BECAME ESSENTIAL TO REPLY TO THAT ATTACK."

7 CONGRESS LEADERS IN THE STATES QUICKLY PICKED UP THE THEME AND IN THE PAST FEW DAYS HAVE BEEN STEPPING UP THEIR ATTACKS ON THE CPI. LIKEWISE, SANJAY HAS JOINED THE CHORUS BUT SO FAR HAS AVOIDED REFERRING TO THE CPI BY NAME. SPEAKING AT A RALLY IN ANDHRA PRADESH, HE SAID THAT "SOME PARTY" WHICH HAD BRANDED THE YOUTH CONGRESS AS A FASCIST FORCE HAD ITSELF ACTED AS THE AGENTS OF THE IMPERIALISTS DURING THE INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE.

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8. COMMENT: IN JUST A LITTLE OVER A MONTH, THE CONGRESS OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE CPI HAS COME A LONG WAY SINCE MRS. GANDHI MADE AN OBLIQUE REFERENCE TO "OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE" IN CONGRESS AFFAIRS AT THE GAUHATI AICC SESSIION. FOR ITS PART, THE CPI HAS SHOWN LITTLE INDICATION THAT IT INTEVND S TO BACK DOWN: THE LATEST EDITION (DEC. 26) OF THE PARTY'S WEEKLY ORGAN "NEW AGE" CARRIES A FRONT-PAGE "MEMO TO THE PRIME MINISTER" URGING HET TO IMPLEMENT THE CPI'S OWN "FIVE-POINT PROGRAM" IN ORDER TO HOLD DOWN PRICES. IN ADDITION, THE CPI WILL LAUNCH ON JAN. 1 A NATIONWIDE CAMPAIGN TO URGE ADOPTION OF ITS ANTI-PRICE RISE PROGRAM.

9. THE LEVEL OF PUBLIC ACRIMONY BETWEEN SANJAY AND CPI LEADERS SUCH AS RAJESHWAR RAO HAD REACHED THE POINT WHERE MRS. GANDHI PROBABLY FELT THE NEED TO EITHER STRONGLY DEFEND HER SON OR ELSE TRY TO "REIN HIM IN". IN CHOOSING THE FORMER COURSE OF ACTION, SHE PLACED THE CPI ON NOTICE THAT UNRESTRICTED CRITICISM OF SANJAY WOULD BE TRATED AS AN ATTACK ON HERSELF. HER REMARKABLE REFERENCE TO SANJAY AS A "SMALL FRY" MAY BE AN EFFORT TO ALLAY FEARS ABOUT HIS GROWING ROLE IN NATIONAL POLITICS AND TO PLACE HIM IN A FRAMEWORK MORE ACCEPTABLE TO HOSTILE ELEMENTS IN THE CONGRESS.

10. IN HER DECEMBER 23 ATTACK ON THE CPI, MRS. GANDHI WAS CAREFUL TO MENTION SOVIET ASSISTANCE TO INDIA IN TIMES OF STRESS AND PEACE. SHE APPEARS TO BE GROWING INCREASINGLY CONFIDENT THAT THE SOVIETS WILL CONTINUE TO STAND ASIDE AS SHE ESCALATES HER BROADSIDES ON INDIAN COMMUNISTS. THE SOVIETS CAN HARDLY BE PLEASED AT THE

TURN OF EVENTS, HOWEVER.
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